

Newton House
56 Company St.
Christiansted
St. Croix
Virgin Islands

HABS No. VI-30

HABS
VI
1-CHRIS

31-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

NEWTON HOUSE

HABS No. VI-30

Virgin Islands, St. Croix, Christiansted
56 Company Street

HABS
VI
1-CHRIS,
31-

Two Stories - Masonry wall bearing. Three wings built along the street, rear and side line of a town lot. 54' x 96'.

GENERAL STATEMENT

Architectural Character: A good example of the larger town houses of Christiansted. It has a typical plan and space distribution. The original design is preserved in all the main features of the building, and it contains excellent examples of early woodwork, hardware and finishes.

Condition of Fabric:

The building is in good structural condition and it is well maintained.

EXTERIOR

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Orientation:

The main wing towards the street runs northeast - southwest and faces southeast, the rear wing of the house is parallel with the front, and the connecting wing is built against the northeast boundary of the lot.

Foundations:

The foundations are constructed of rubble and brick masonry. It is not articulated except yard-side of the northeast connecting wing, where it is expressed by a slight projection, four feet above pavement level, on the pillars supporting the ground floor arches.

Wall Construction:

Brick masonry throughout with bands, capitals and other architectural decoration in plaster. The walls are painted yellow and the trim white.

Main Wing:

The main wing is three bays wide by nine bays long. On the street-side, the second story is carried out over the sidewalk and is supported on six, square, brick pillars and seven arches. The pillars have simple band capitals and bases. The five arches toward the street are semielliptical arches. The arches in the sidewalk are semi-circular. The arches have plaster keystones which are connected with the lower of two horizontal plaster bands that on the exterior demark the division of the first and second floor. The flat brick arches over the second-story windows project slightly and are plastered. They are crowned by a one-course, plastered brick band. Immediately below the eaves the main wing has a continuous horizontal plaster band.

Side wing:

The side wing is four bays wide by six bays long. It has an open gallery on the second floor that runs the full length of the wing. The gallery is supported on four barrel vaults. The gallery is accessible from the courtyard by two straight-run brick masonry staircases located at the two ends of the gallery in the corners between the side wing and the front and rear wings respectively. The staircases are parallel with and built against the walls of the rear and front wings.

An open kitchen range constructed in brick masonry is located on the gallery in the two bays next to the rear wing.

Plastered capital bands at the spring point of the vaults supporting the gallery are the only decorative masonry feature of the side wing.

Rear Wing:

The rear wing is six bays long by two bays wide. The original design of this wing has been greatly modified. The exterior walls of this

wing are plain without banding, cornices or other architectural decoration. An open porch occupies the eastern-most bays of the second floor.

Openings - doorways & doors:

The second floor is the principal floor. It is reached by the two masonry staircases in the courtyard mentioned above, or from the street by an exterior masonry staircase along the west side of the main wing. The access to the courtyard is through an arched driveway under the two western-most bays of the main wing.

Main Wing:

The ground floor has five door openings towards the street. The four easterly openings are equipped with double shutters of double-board construction, with exterior vertical and interior horizontal boarding. The fifth opening provides access to the courtyard and is furnished with a board and rail gate. An arched opening in the masonry wall immediately west of the main wing provides access to the staircase leading to the main entrance of the second floor. It is equipped with a gate of the same construction as the gate to the courtyard, and has decorative cutouts in the upper section of the vertical boarding. The exterior second floor doorways are furnished with shutters of the same construction as on the ground floor, backed by three-sectioned double doors with movable louvres in the upper two sections and solid raised panels in the lower sections.

Side Wing:

The ground floor of the side wing is entirely open and has no exterior doors proper.

Rear Wing:

The ground floor of the rear wing contains the cisterns and does not have any doorways or openings.

Windows & Shutters:

The window openings of the main wing are equipped with exterior double, two-panel shutters, glazed double-hung sash (six-above-six) and interior double, two-panel jalousie shutters with movable louvres. The window openings of the rear and side wings lack the glazed sash, but are otherwise identical. The ground floor window openings throughout are equipped with shutters of double-board construction only.

Roof:

The rear and street wings have hipped roofs, the side wing has a roof of the same pitch and is continuous with the other roofs. The roofing throughout is corrugated metal on sheathing and rafters. There are no cornices and the eaves of the roof project only slightly over the walls. The side wing has a dormer on the east side.

Chimneys:

The previously mentioned kitchen range on the second floor of the side wing has a brick chimney. There are no other chimneys.

Stoops:

The main entrance to the second floor on the west side of the street wing is reached by a brick masonry stair built against the gable end of the wing. The staircase terminates in a small covered porch, with wooden posts and a "pie crust" frieze below the eaves of the porch roof.

INTERIOR

Street Wing:

The ground floor contains from west to east the driveway to the courtyard and four rooms, two toward the street and two toward the rear.

The rooms are interconnected and there is no hallway.

On the second floor the two west bays contain an entrance hall toward the rear and a study towards the front. A living room and a parlor

occupy the next four and three bays respectively for the full width of the wing.

Side Wing:

The entire ground floor is one large room. The second floor has two rooms, two bathrooms, two walk-in closets and a staircase to the attic. The covered gallery towards the courtyards provides access to the rooms, closets and staircase.

Rear Wing:

The ground floor has two cisterns and a storage closet. The second floor has a small hallway that provides access to two rooms, a bathroom and a covered terrace.

Stairways:

Besides the 3 exterior brick masonry staircases described above there is one interior wood staircase leading from the 2nd floor gallery of the side wing to the attic of the side wing. The attic contains two rooms.

Floors:

The ground floor of the street wing has brick and wood floors. The side wing cement tile. The 2nd floor of the street and side wing has wood floors throughout except for gallery and bathroom. The gallery is paved in marble and limestone tiles and the bathroom in ceramic floor tile. The rear wing has cement tile flooring throughout.

Wall & Ceiling Finish:

The interior masonry walls are plastered, and painted except for the ground floor of the side wing where the walls are painted only. Interior wood partitions are sheathed on both sides.

Ceilings on the ground floor and on the second floor gallery of the side wing are wood with exposed beams. All others are furred wood ceilings. The living room and the parlor in the the street wing have wood tray ceilings.

Doorways & doors:

The interior doors are three-sectioned double jalousie doors with movable louvres in the top two sections and a solid panel in the lower section. All doorways have moulded casings.

Trim:

The rooms on the second floor of the street wing have panelled wainscoating moulded dado and baseboards, moulded window casings, cornice and finish mouldings under the ceiling. Other second floor rooms have identical mouldings except for the wainscoating and the dado. The rooms on the ground floor have no trim.

Hardware:

Shutters and stormdoors are equipped with wrought-iron strap hinges, wall hooks and sliding surface bolts; and in some cases wrought-iron hasps. Interior shutters and doors have wrought-iron H hinges and bar hooks, the doors also have sliding surface bolts or brass locks with brass knobs.

Lighting:

The building is fully wired for electricity. Previous lighting appears to have been kerosene and candles.

Heating:

None.

OTHER

GENERAL SETTING

The building is on a town lot measuring approximately 96' x 105'

in a block bounded by Company, Church, King and Queen's Cross Streets. The lot backs on the ground of Government House. It is enclosed by a masonry wall from 8 to 10 feet in height and ^{by} the 3 wings of the building. Besides the main structure, the grounds contain a one-story masonry cook house now used as a dressing room and the foundation of an unidentified structure now converted into a swimming pool.

Both the cook house and the swimming pool are to the west of the rear wing and built against the back boundary wall. The area between the wings is paved. The remaining part of the lot is landscaped with mahogany, coconut palm, orange and other trees and several kinds of ornamental scrubs. The garden is intersected by paved walks.

Prepared by Frederik C. Gjesing, Archt
Oct. 1955

Edited by: Jack Barker, Jr.
H.A.B.S.
September 1984